

CUTHBERTSON GAME FARM EXPANSION DECISION NOTICE

January 25, 1999

GAME FARM APPLICATION AND MEPA REVIEW

On October 7, 1998, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) received an application to expand the existing 120 elk Autumn Song Elk Ranch, located on 120 acres at 2320 Lower Valley Road, Kalispell, MT. The applicants propose to expand the existing ranch from 120 elk to 200 adult elk but not expand the acreage. FWP notified the Cuthbertsons on November 6, 1998, that their application for the expansion was complete.

The existing Autumn Song Elk Ranch is located approximately 5 miles southeast of Kalispell and just south of Church Slough. The game farm is located on existing level agricultural land. The game farm is divided into many pastures; the whole game farms can be irrigated.

FWP received the application for the original game farm on July 11, 1996. We completed the draft EA on and held a public comment period from October 29 to November 18, 1997. FWP then issued its first Decision Notice to issue the elk game farm license on December 2, 1997. A revised Decision Notice was completed on February 10, 1997. The final license, with stipulations, was issued March 17, 1997.

The proposed expansion would not add any new land to the game farm, but would increase the number of adult elk the game farm could legally contain. The reason for the proposed expansion is to enable the landowners to fully utilize the available forage being produced on the 120 acres.

FWP did not prepare a new Environmental Assessment (EA) on this proposal. The expansion should not cause any new or significant impacts to the environment not already addressed by the first EA. To assist in this conclusion, FWP evaluated the potential impact of an additional 80 elk on existing vegetation. Using an estimate of forage production provided by the applicant (3 tons/acre) and an elk consumption rate of 11 lbs/day, the existing game farm will, on average, produce sufficient forage for approximately 200 elk. The applicants have the flexibility to manage production and consumption through irrigation, fertilization, rest-rotation management, and animal (number) management. As concluded in the original EA, the game farm will not result in any significant impacts that cannot be mitigated; it may result in minor impacts to existing habitat for upland game birds, small mammals, and birds.

Draft EA and Decision Notice for the original game farm can be obtained by contacting Noemi Barta at the FWP Regional Headquarters in Kalispell, 490 N. Meridian Rd. 59901 or by calling Noemi at 751-4579.

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LICENSE STIPULATIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL DECISION NOTICE

The existing game farm license for the Autumn Song Elk Ranch included the following:

The licensee must be in compliance with all game farm statutes and rules. Applicants must obtain approval of a quarantine facility, or plan, from the Department of Livestock prior to issuance of a game farm license.

1. The game farm cannot exceed 120 elk.
2. The licensee or manager must report the ingress and the reason for such ingress immediately upon discovery of any of the following game animals or predators from list defined by Montana law 87-2-101 MCA: Deer, elk, moose, mountain lion, bear, and coyote.

PROPOSED DECISION AND STIPULATIONS:

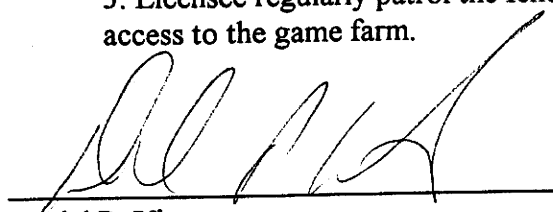
Based on the information provided in the original EA, the proposed application, and provided in this documentation, FWP proposes to issue an amended game farm license for the Autumn Song Elk Ranch for 200 adult elk with the following stipulations and recommendations. The recommendations are provided as suggestions to further reduce risk of game farm animals escaping or game animals/predators from entering the game farm. These recommendations have been included in most game farm Decision Notice's issued since the original Autumn Elk Song Game Ranch was licensed in early 1997.

1. The game farm cannot exceed 200 adult elk.
2. Licensee or manager must report the ingress and the reason for such ingress immediately upon discovery of any of the following game animals or predators from list defined by Montana law 87-2-101 MCA: Deer, elk, moose, mountain lion, bear, and coyote.

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Licensee properly store hay, feed and salt in enclosed containers and/or in buildings and provided to game farm animals a sufficient distance from the perimeter fence to minimize the attraction of wild animals;
2. Licensee use commonly accepted sanitation measures to remove excess feed, dead animals and other wildlife attractants from the game farm in a timely manner;

3. Licensee regularly patrol the fences to determine whether wild animals are gaining access to the game farm.



Daniel P. Vincent
Regional Supervisor

1/26/99

Date

Please sign and return the original to FWP to indicate your concurrence with the license stipulations listed above. A copy of the signed decision will be provided to you for your records.

Mail to: Noemí Barta, FWP Region One, 490 North Meridian Rd., Kalispell, M 59901.

Jeffrey S. Cuthbertson

Date

Kimberly A. Cuthbertson

Date

Gary L. Cuthbertson

Date

JoAnn S. Cuthbertson

Date

REF:CUTH2DEC.WPD
January 25, 1999

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